

# CITY of TORRANCE VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

Winter 2012

## What's New for Volunteers



*When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die.  
~ Eleanor Roosevelt*

### The Torrance Volunteer Program on Community CitiCABLE

"Senior Scene's" new hostess, Hope Witkowsky, will be highlighting Torrance volunteers on two upcoming segments of the popular show. On a show featuring transportation options for seniors, Witkowsky will be interviewing several of the City's Transit Ambassadors. On another new episode of

"Senior Scene," volunteering opportunities at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center including a Certified Emergency Response Team (CERT) member, and the volunteer with the Words on Wheels Program will be showcased. New episodes of "Senior Scene" are expected to begin airing daily in early 2012 at 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on Torrance CitiCABLE Channel 3.



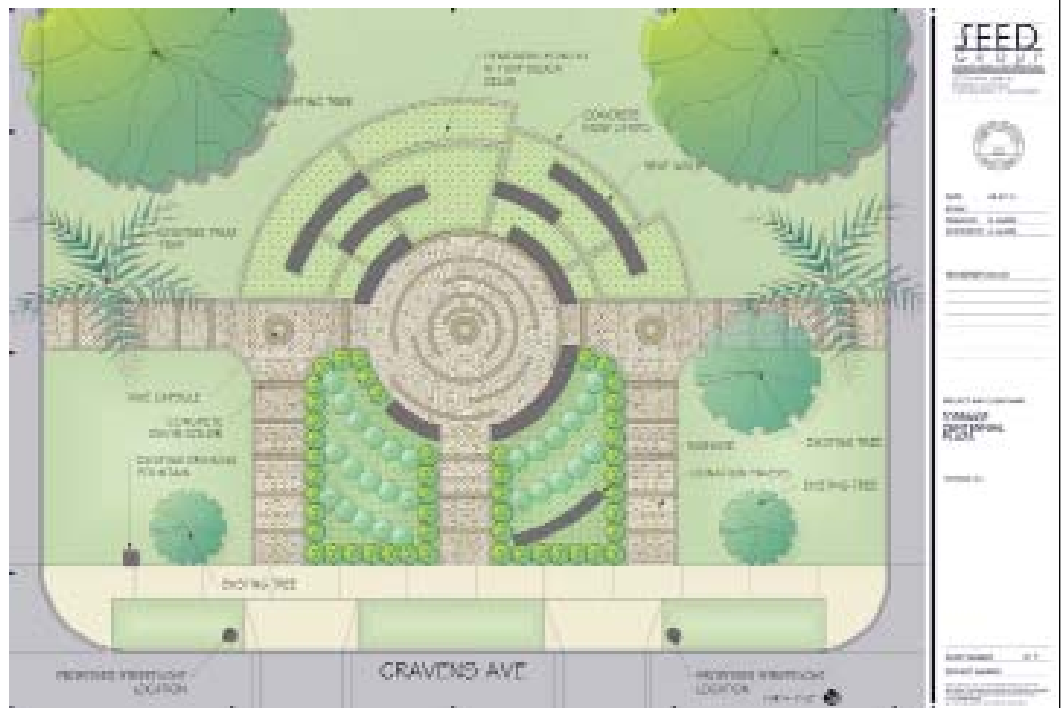
### Youth Basketball Needs You!

The Community Services Department needs approximately 200 coaches and assistant coaches to train, inspire and motivate our local youth for a

basketball season that begins in January and ends in March. If you do not have coaching experience, you may still have what it takes to provide coaching in this youth sports program that promotes teamwork skills, good sportsmanship and healthy competition. For more information, see the Youth Sports Web page at [www.TorranceCA.Gov/Parks/9626.htm](http://www.TorranceCA.Gov/Parks/9626.htm).

### Centennial Events & Centennial Online Store

On Nov.6 at Wilson Park, the City kicked off the Centennial celebration with the "Lights, Camera, Action" event. Over 2,000 participants braved an uncertain weather forecast and switched on their Pelican Products flashlight to welcome in Torrance's 100th year as an incorporated City. Photographers riding in a Robinson Helicopter recorded the illuminated words, "Torrance 1912 to 2012." The next Centennial event will be ringing in the 2012 New Year on Dec.31. Stay up to date on all of the Centennial fun by checking the Centennial Event Calendar at [www.TorranceCentennial.Org/](http://www.TorranceCentennial.Org/) and clicking on "Events."



Help support the City of Torrance's Centennial celebration by visiting the online store at [www.TorranceCentennial.Org/Store](http://www.TorranceCentennial.Org/Store). Commemorative items include T-shirts, tote-bags, and hats. Centennial Bricks, which will be used to build the Centennial Plaza walkways at El Prado Park, are also available for purchase. Bricks can be engraved with three lines of 16 characters each. Centennial Bricks are a great way to celebrate our City's 100th birthday. For more information about the Centennial plaza (rendering shown above), paste the following into your web browser: <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=ahgu59fab&oeidk=a07e4xzt6m4e5c15f74>



## Focal Point on Aging

By Jennifer Hagihara

Every day the volunteers at Focal Point on Aging make a difference in the lives of senior citizen residents of the Torrance/South Bay area.

The facility includes 12 trained volunteers who answer questions and engage in research on behalf of senior citizens, their families and caregivers. Focal Point, which is located in downtown Torrance, provides information on services including transportation, housing, abuse, disabilities, discounts and health care.

"I serve as an advocate for the people who call," Letty Molinos said. "I like it because I enjoy talking to people and am compassionate for what others need, [and] a lot of people don't know where to go for information. This office has a lot of referral services and I like to help."

Molinos was introduced to Focal Point earlier this year by a friend who volunteers with the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). The services Focal Point provides, coupled with helping others discover resources, led Molinos to join the team in February of this year.



"You get a personal satisfaction when you help people," said Molinos. "This is a very nice group of volunteers."

During the 90s, the Agency on Aging designated centers in LA County where seniors could learn about resources available in their communities. Called Focal Points,



*Focal Point volunteers: Annabel St. John (left), Letty Molinos*

48 centers opened up including one in Torrance, which launched on Aug. 23, 1991.

Bea Virobik, who began volunteering in 1998, has seen a growth in the number of assistance resources offered to seniors in the years she's been at Focal Point. As a person who cares about their community and the well-being of others, Virobik loves to volunteer.

"It gives me great satisfaction to know I am making a difference in the persons life I make contact with," Virobik said. "Whether it is just being a good listener or connecting a person with needed services, giving back to my community and working toward a cause [is what] I am passionate about."

The volunteers assist 150 or more people a month. And, in addition to providing each person with valuable resources, they also provide support—particularly in listening and showing compassion.

"There's a mix of all ages volunteering here," said Virobik. "The youngest volunteer is in their late 60s and the oldest is in their 90s. Older people can relate to older people because they have gone through a lot of different life experiences. And these volunteers are excellent listeners for someone who may not want a resource."

Annabel St. John, a long-time volunteer, met up with a few ladies who worked at Focal Point, and in July, became a Focal Point volunteer.

"I think we have an innate desire to help others," St. John said. "I think it's that we've been helped by others in our life, so we want to help others as well."

Focal Point on Aging is located at 1339 Post Avenue in downtown Torrance. They are open Monday through Friday and offer a variety of fliers and brochures. No appointment is necessary and walk-ins are welcome. For more information call (310) 320-1300.



## Volunteer Security Checkers

*Better be despised for too anxious apprehensions, than ruined by too confident security.  
~ Edmund Burke*

While on vacation, Laurie Nakano worried about the safety of her house. She would ask her friends or neighbors to check her property once in a while to ensure things were safe and secure.



Then a friend introduced Nakano to a service provided by the Community Affairs Division called Volunteer Security Check. After filling out a detailed form on the Torrance Police Department's website, Nakano didn't have to worry about the safety of her home anymore.

"Volunteers check the perimeter of the house for anything suspicious," Police Sgt. Jennifer Uyeda said. "A lot of the times the volunteers will pick up the newspaper to make sure it looks like the residents are home."

## *To become a volunteer,*

*a background check along with training on what to do if there is suspicious activity with a house is needed. Courses in driving were needed for two of the four volunteers because they drive City cars.*

*"The volunteers do an excellent job," Nakano said. "They are very professional, and I really appreciate the hard work they do. It's an excellent service."*

According to Uyeda, the program has been around for many years. Before volunteers were involved, homeowners would call the police station asking for extra patrol cars to monitor their homes while they were away. In 2009, Torrance PD decided to incorporate volunteers into the free service which relieved the officers on duty.

"I think it's great Torrance has this program," Nakano said. "It's just an added assurance that someone is looking over my house. I highly recommend it, especially for those who don't have someone looking in on their house."

Danny Hylands is one of the four volunteers who serve as a Security Check. After working with the City of Torrance for 29 years, Hylands made the decision to retire. After two months of relaxation, he went right back to work, as a volunteer.

"I have a lot of friends working for the city," Hylands said. "I know the City really well because I used to

work in the post office and I wanted to help."

All volunteers have a partner. Hylands, along with his partner, Ian Saso, can check up to 24 houses a day, two to three times a week. Volunteer security checks vary on the duration of the vacationer's absence and volunteer availability.

During the summer season, as many as 120 homes need to be monitored by the volunteers. Sometimes, the volunteers become the suspicious ones.

"We have neighbors who challenge us," Hylands said. "So we show them our ID. Most people are surprised that we have this service and that it's free."

Hylands and Saso have encountered a few incidences in which they called the police because of a suspected break-in. Fortunately, nothing serious has happened and issues were resolved peacefully.



Volunteer Security Checkers: Danny Highlands (left), Ian Saso

## About Your City



### Del Amo Boulevard Extension

The Del Amo Boulevard Extension Project broke ground in Nov. 2010 as major progress of the new bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad begins to take shape. When the project is complete, Del Amo Boulevard will be a four-lane divided roadway and will provide an additional east-west route throughout the City.



This major public works project is funded by a variety of sources, including \$7 million from the federal Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) and \$3.1 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Economic Stimulus funds). In addition the project received local funding from METRO (\$6.7 million) as well as \$2.6 million from Proposition 1B (a 2006 state-wide ballot initiative to fund transportation improvements). And \$1 million from Proposition C (local sales tax allocation for transportation improvements). The extension of Del Amo Boulevard is expected to open in summer of 2012.

You can follow project construction on Facebook at: [www.Facebook.com/pages/City-of-Torrance-Del-Amo-Blvd-Extension-Construction-Project](http://www.Facebook.com/pages/City-of-Torrance-Del-Amo-Blvd-Extension-Construction-Project) For questions relating to construction detours and project progress, contact Project Engineer Craig Bilezerian P.E. at (310) 781-6900 or at [CBilezerian@TorranceCA.Gov](mailto:CBilezerian@TorranceCA.Gov).

### Budget Update:

At the City's 1st Quarter Budget Review held on Dec.13, the City's Finance Department presented a cautious financial outlook. The City closed Fiscal Year 2010-2011 with a carryover (revenues, transfers and use of fund balance less expenditures) of approximately \$250,000, but certain key revenues remain depressed into Fiscal Year 2011-2012. Specifically, Utility Users' Tax is failing to rebound. This trend could be permanent since cell phone use is transitioning to texting and data transfer, which are not taxable. Another blow to the City's budget was realized when the State of California redirected \$530,000 in Vehicle License Fees (VLF) to balance the State budget.

But there is positive economic news. New auto sales are up and sale numbers for Black Friday and Cyber Monday are showing a growing consumer confidence. In addition, unemployment figures improved nationally for October of 2011 and the Torrance unemployment rate is lower than many South Bay cities. The City has seen this positive impact in the first three months of sales tax receipts, which have increased by 3.3% over the same period last year.

Another favorable economic indicator is the rate of new investments in the local economy. Torrance has seen some major investments with the new construction of an Audi dealership, an In-N-Out Burger franchise, a Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market, and the renovation of a Walmart, all located on Hawthorne Boulevard. The two major hospitals in Torrance, Little Company of Mary and Torrance Memorial, have major expansions in progress. This will add to the City's construction tax revenue.

The City has continued to keep expenditures under budget for the first quarter. Notably, salaries and benefits, which represent 75% of the general fund budget, have decreased by approximately \$1.3 million from the same period last year.

For more information about the City's financial position, see the full report on the City's webpage at [www.TorranceCA.Gov/1741.htm](http://www.TorranceCA.Gov/1741.htm).

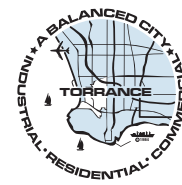


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